

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

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R 281733Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7072

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI 11442

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, VS, VN

SUBJECT: INDIAN RELATIONS WITH SOUTH VIETNAM

REF: (A) SAIGON 16976; (B) NEW DELHI 10014 (C) NEW DELHI 9706

BEGIN SUMMARY: INDIA APPEARS TO BE MOVING CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD
A MORE MODERATE AND BALANCED RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTH VIETNAM.
THIS ISN'T QUITE A "SEA TURN" AS KY DESCRIBED IT (REFTEL A),
BUT RATHER AN EFFORT TO KEEP OPTIONS OPEN FOR INDIA AS IT WATCHES
WITH CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY DEVELOPMENTS IN VIETNAM AND INDOCHINA.
END SUMMARY.

1. AS WE REPORTED REFTEL B, SOUTH VIETNAM SENATOR THYM'S
TRIP TO DELHI IN AUGUST HELPED DAMP DOWN ANTAGONISM THAT HAD
BEEN BUBBLING BETWEEN DELHI AND SAIGON OVER INDIAN DECISION
IN EARLY 1972 TO RAISE RELATIONS WITH HANOI TO AMBASSADORIAL
LEVEL AND TUTH VIETNAMESE EXPANSION OF INDIAN ICC STAFF.
FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER FOR INDOCHINA ASCRIBED FRIENDLY
RECEPTION ACCORDED THUAN TO GOI'S READINESS TO RESPOND TO SAIGON'S
EVIDENT DESIRE TO PUT ASIDE RECRIMINATIONS AND TO SEEK FRIENDLIER
TIES WITH INDIA. THERE WAS A GOOD DEAL OF "SAIGON NOW ADMITS
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IT WAS WRONG TO REACT AS IT DID IN 1972" IN DESK OFFICER'S

EXPLANATION OF INDIAN ATTITUDE.

2. IN BROADER TERMS, PRESS AND POPULAR INTEREST IN VIETNAM HAS SUBSIDED DRAMATICALLY SINCE THE END OF THE BOMBING AND PEACE AGREEMENTS AS HAS POPULAR HOSTILITY TOWARD US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM -- WHICH TO CONSIDERABLE DEGREE RUBBED OFF ON SAIGON.

IN ADDITION, INDIAN SWERVE TOWARD NORTH VIETNAM IN 1972 WAS

TAKEN IN ATMOSPHERE OF ANGER TOWARD US OVER OUR POLICY ON THE BANGLADESH WAR AND IN EXPECTATION THAT HANOI WAS LIKELY TO DOMINATE INDOCHINA WHEN PEACE FINALLY CAME. RELATIONS WITH US HAVE IMPROVED AND INDIANS NOW APPEAR QUITE UNCERTAIN ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND BALANCE OF FORCES IN VIETNAM AND INDO-CHINA. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, INDIA HAS ADOPTED CAUTIOUS PUBLIC POSTURE TOWARD VIETNAM AND APPEARS INTERESTED IN BROADENING ITS OPTIONS WITHOUT TAKING DRAMATIC MOVES. SOUTH VIETNAMESE CONSUL HERE BELIEVES GOI'S ATTITUDE MAY ALSO BE INFLUENCED BY INTEREST OF SOME INDIAN BUSINESSMEN IN POSSIBLE COMMERCIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN RECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE FACTORS ARE MORE RELEVANT TO CURRENT INDIAN APPROACH THAN PERSONAL ATTITUDE OF JOINT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIA PARANJPE. SOUTH VIETNAMESE CONSUL ALSO MENTIONED TO US THAT PARANJPE SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY BRIEF STOPOVER IN SAIGON IN JUNE BUT CONSUL NOTED PARANJPE SPENT ALMOST TWO WEEKS IN NORTH VIETNAM ON SAME TRIP. IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC POLITICS, GOI SEEMS TO FEEL NEED FOR CAUTION IN RELATIONS WITH SOUTH VIETNAM AS WITNESS INDIAN REQUEST THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE CONSULATE NOT PUBLICIZE VISIT OF SENATOR THUAN FOR FEAR THAT COMMUNIST MPS AND LEFT WING CONGRESS FIGURES WOULD ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT FOR ACCOMODATING SAIGON (REFTEL C).

4. ON NEXT STEPS TOWARD RVN, SOUTH VIETNAMESE CONSUL EXPECTS SMALL INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GROUP TO VISIT SAIGON IN NOVEMBER. FOUR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (ONE JANA SANGH AND THREE CONGRESS PARTY INCLUDING A.P. SHARMA, ANTI-COMMUNIST DEPUTY CONGRESS LEADER IN THE LOWER HOUSE) HAVE SOUNDED OUT SOUTH VIETNAMESE HERE ON VISITING SAIGON AND TRIP MAY TAKE PLACE IN JANUARY. NEITHER WE NOR SOUTH VIETNAMESE CONSULATE HAVE DETECTED ANY

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SIGNS THAT GOI IS CONSIDERING RAISING REPRESENTATION WITH SAIGON TO AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL.

5. MRS. GANDHI'S BANQUET INVITATION TO SO-CALLED PRG PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER AT ALGIERS WEAS PROBABLY EXTENDED WITH EYE TO IMPRESSION ON NON-ALIGNED COLLEAGUES. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD US GOI MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH PRG REPRESENTATIVES (PERHAPS IN HANOI) AND THAT THEY HAVE PRESSED GOI FOR RECOGNITION

OR AT LEAST TO ALLOW PRG TO OPEN INFORMATION OFFICE IN DELHI; THE INDIANS HAVE EXPLAINED TO PRG REPRESENTATIVES IN LEGALISTIC TERMS THEIR RELUCTANCE TO TAKE EITHER OF THESE STEPS. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SYMPATHETIC TO PRG HAVE PUBLICLY QUESTIONED GOI ON THIS ISSUE AND HAVE BEEN TOLD MATTER IS UNDER CONSIDERATION. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD US RELATIONS WITH PRG ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN "UNDER CONSIDERATION" AND THAT THERE ARE NO DECISION PAPERS ON PRG UP FOR MINISTERIAL CONSIDERATION. AGAIN, THIS POSTURE IS CONSISTENT WITH GOI'S CURRENT CAUTION ON VIETNAM.

6. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT DELHI'S RELATIONS WITH HANOI ARE SOUR. SOUTH VIETNAM CONSUL WHO FOLLOWS SUBJECT CLOSELY BELIEVES RELATIONS ARE FRIENDLY IF NOT PARTICULARLY CLOSE. SIZE AND LEVEL OF TURNOUT FOR SEPTEMBER 2 NOTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL DAY FUNCTION DROPPED OFF THIS YEAR, BUT THIS IS PROBABLY NATURAL FUNCTION OF DECLINING INTEREST WITH THE END OF THE WAR.

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